

**Inheritance as Intimate, Implicated Publics:  
Building Practices of Remembrance with Future Teachers in Response to Residential  
School Survivor Testimonial Media and Literature**

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**Abstract**

*In this article, I contextualize and outline my use of testimonial literature, including orature, by residential school survivors in a preservice course focused on building practices of witness-as-study (Simon & Eppert, 2005). My theorization of the course curriculum and pedagogy draws on key texts by Roger Simon as a means of proposing pedagogical strategies that teacher educators and teachers in Canada might bring to their classrooms as we take up the invitation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to engage the broader Canadian society in the task of publicly witnessing and commemorating the testimonies of First Nations, Inuit and Métis (FNIM) residential school survivors.*

In such community, we may yet find a way to be answerable to the gift we encounter in reading Levinas. (Simon, 2003, p. 58)

Throughout his career Roger Simon grappled with core questions concerning the relationship of education to social change<sup>1</sup>. From the possibilities and logocentric constraints of critical pedagogy,<sup>2</sup> he increasingly focused on how education proposes to intervene in the affective structuring of subjectivity with the agenda of changing political structures<sup>3</sup>. Of particular interest to his later work are the affective dynamics of learning that might be sparked by rigorous reading practices of testamentary texts within communities forged through remembrance-based pedagogies. It is in such reading practices that he locates the ethical impulse to thought that constitutes a non-naïve hope.

Amongst the range of memory projects Roger examined, I have been deeply influenced by his teaching, writings, and conversations on the task of public pedagogy in relation to the mandate of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on Indian Residential Schools (IRS). The trajectory of my own teaching has reflected an increasing focus on the question of how we, who locate our work within colonial nation-building institutions of schooling, might take up our difficult colonial inheritance. I am fortunate to be able to pursue these concerns in the unique context of my university: a small, liberal arts-focused, concurrent teacher education program that allows for sustained, intimate classroom conversations and reflects my department's growing commitment to honour the ACDE (Association of Canadian Deans of Education) Accord on Indigenous Education (2009).

This paper is informed by a larger project of becoming answerable to the gift I have encountered in the testimonies and teachings of Indigenous educators<sup>4</sup> and survivors who have generously shared their insights into inter-generational trauma, healing, resistance, and truth-telling in the face of ongoing colonization including the legacies of residential schools. In this article, I contextualize and outline my use of testimonial literature, including orature, by residential school survivors in a preservice course focused on building practices of witness-

as-study (Simon & Eppert, 2005). These practices are framed within an understanding of schooling as both a state institution and a heterogeneous, intergenerational community with ongoing ethical implications and obligations. My theorization of the course curriculum and pedagogy draws on key texts by Roger Simon (2000, 2003, 2005, 2011, 2013) as a means of proposing concrete strategies that teacher educators and teachers in Canada might bring to their classrooms as we take up the invitation of the TRC to engage the broader Canadian society in the task of publicly witnessing and commemorating the testimonies of First Nations, Inuit and Métis (FNIM) residential school survivors. In doing this, I hope to take part in a greater historic process of fostering a historical imaginary that could offer new forms of citizenship and identity in Canada.

### **Contexts of Reception and the Task of Pedagogy**

Any remembrance of the impact and legacy of residential schools needs to acknowledge the IRS policy not only as a singular violence against the over 150,000 interned children themselves (Truth and Reconciliation Commission), but more importantly as a key element in a continuous project of colonization, political disenfranchisement, and land dispossession justified by a settler colonial political culture that persists and elicits our ongoing participation in the present. In acknowledging this, it must also be recognized that the TRC was brought about by FNIM peoples who have battled for decades to secure this intergenerational forum of remembrance as part of a historic governmental settlement with survivors (Fontaine, 2008). This means that the commission's first responsibility is to create a forum where the testimony of survivors can be honoured as part of a process of intergenerational healing. At the same time, as Roger outlined in 2008 (published as Simon, 2013), the gathering of such a historic body of survivor testimony will inspire a host of social responses and cultural production. The circulation of these testamentary and aesthetic texts beyond their contexts of production raises vital questions of how these texts will be received and interpreted by different readers and what may be learned.

These questions point to the separate TRC mandate of public pedagogy outside FNIM communities, one that is highly contested and subject to the discursive and affective dynamics of colonial political culture (see for example, Younging *et al.* 2009; Regan, 2010; Mathur *et al.*, 2011; Henderson & Wakeham, 2013). This secondary mandate "to promote awareness and public education" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) is reiterated in Justice Murray Sinclair's address to the Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples about the Winnipeg national event. He writes:

[T]he most powerful moments were often the quietest. At an exhibition of photographs from the residential schools, you could see people gazing into the small faces in the pictures. In the light of understanding that flickered in their eyes came the realization that these were children. Just children. And in moments like those, when realization gives way to understanding, resolve takes hold. It is then that the truth becomes not only known but felt. It is then that we move from a state of apology to one where true reconciliation can begin. It is those quiet moments in the hearts of all Canadians that we seek. (Sinclair, 2010, p.7)

The kind of learning Justice Sinclair describes is of the highest importance to our shared present and future as Canadians. He posits that truth telling is pedagogical when it lights a movement from realization to understanding. Such an understanding is covenantal<sup>5</sup>, he implies, when a truth is felt—in an emotional, affective, or aesthetic way—such that understanding seals a commitment to a transformed way of being and acting in relation to others. There is a particular path implied in this pedagogy—from the unveiling of truth and its apprehension to the witness' emotional response, conscious acknowledgment, and commitment to an ongoing, implicated, active relationality in their everyday lives. Such a model raises the question of what emotions teach.

In a paper entitled “Breaking the Silence” first presented to TRC commissioners, survivors, and scholars at a 2008 conference in Montreal, Roger Simon (2013) asked what sorts of emotional experience might “foster an ethics of responsibility in which condolence, regret, and reparation will underwrite the possibility of more just, historically informed, social and political bonds” (p. 130). Indeed, he questions the extent to which feelings are even sufficient to this curricular aspiration. We might also ask, with Sara Ahmed (2004), if feelings can be treated as discrete, stable, transferable properties that would act as guarantors of such learning (pp. 10-11). In response, Simon (2013) outlines a number of risks inherent in the practice of listening to stories of suffering (especially across asymmetries of power), reminding us “there is present in contemporary society, a historically specific, socially organized mode of regarding the pain of others” (p. 131). In making this claim, Simon outlines how this organized practice of recognizing others' suffering is informed by both the affective economies and discursive imperatives of memorialization where the mode of remembrance reduces the testifier to a spectacle of pain, a victim of history and an undifferentiated object of pathos even as the listener might self-congratulatorily “feel good about feeling bad” (p. 133).

Losing sight of the singularity of a particular testimony, such listening practices risk privileging the most dramatic, emotive, and shocking examples of victimization (p. 134). Such spectacular representations of violence raise what Bal (2007) identifies as “the problem of sentimentality ... of an identification that either appropriates someone else' pain or exploits it to feel oneself feeling” (p. 94). She explores this exploitative practice of passive identification as a mode of looking that seeks to mitigate the difficulty of viewing representations of great suffering and all that these unleash, including “undirected emotions, vicarious guilt, indifference as a shield to bear it, and secondary exploitation” of viewers (2007, p. 96). Simon urges educators to consider what critical questions these discursively organized modes of looking and listening preclude, as well as what kinds of politics they enact. He cautions that on their own, stories of suffering may be listened to in ways that deny implication, re-institute colonial relations, and reduce civic responsibility to feelings of guilt that are easily domesticated, dissociated, and assigned to the forgotten actions of distant others long ago (2013, p. 133).

Emotional responses to representations of historic violence are not only susceptible to but can produce and reify a particular politics. As Ahmed (2004) argues, it is through emotions that subjects come to experience distinct social formations as real, to (dis)identify, align or orient themselves in relation to formations like nation, gender, or ethnos (pp. 10-12). Examining the Australian Sorry movement that emerged in response to the *Bringing Them Home* report on residential schools, Ahmed observes the way non-Aboriginals' explicit declarations of collective shame circulated as a mode of (self) recognition that allowed a wounded, contemporary white Australian nation to take shape as a “felt community” (pp. 101-105). Within this context, non-Aboriginals' shared feeling of national shame becomes a

practice of identifying with the suffering of a shamed white nation: “what makes the injustice unjust is that it ... has deprived white Australia of its ability to declare its pride” (Ahmed 2004, p. 112). The white nation that comes to be collectively felt and materialized as it circulates within the Sorry movement is constituted as an object of pride, even—or particularly—as such a sentiment is threatened by the shame of residential schools. As a result, declarations of national shame ambivalently reaffirm patriotic love of the nation (Ahmed, 2004, p. 112). Paradoxically, it is to the bodies of survivors that the negativity of shame adheres, as it is the survivors’ testimonies that expose a national crime. As shame/pride intensifies (on) the surfaces of bodies—some bodies marked as sources of shame, others of (lost) pride—boundaries crystallize, harden and reproduce hegemonic identities of a white ‘us’ wounded by the painful knowledge that revelations of Aboriginal pain render impossible to ignore.

Feelings of shame can work, then, to materialize and harden boundaries between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and to stitch non-Aboriginal peoples affectively into the settler nation. Specifically, by passing through temporary shame, pride is lost but then recuperated through the idealization of pride as a unifying normative feeling of belonging (Ahmed, 2004, pp.107-112). The problem here is that the politics of this form of shame forecloses on any ability to remain open to witness the testimonies of the injured other. It is the white nation’s presumed temporary slip from ideality that is being witnessed rather than the violation of Aboriginal people (pp.118-119).

In mapping the circuits of ambivalent affects that flow through movements recognizing collective complicity, Ahmed (2004) suggests that it is less the content of the feeling that should concern educators than how specific emotions can work to anchor a particular sense of time, history, and (non)belonging. As educators, we need to disrupt the colonial temporalities and registers of memory and belonging that mediate non-Aboriginal subjects’ sense of civic relationality—their sense of ‘Canadianness’, of ways of relating beyond, before or against the state—if we hope to shift their capacity to respond to the address and claim of a past outside their structures of recognition, and to open to the shared present and futures that claim implies. In illustration, Celermajor (2006) has examined the ways residential school history is partitioned off (not as *Australian* history and memory but as *Aboriginal*). This segregated model of history is a consequence of the necessity of Aboriginal groups to mobilize liberal rights discourses in order to extract recognition and redress by the state. Of concern to Celermajor, however, is how this sense of history privileges ahistorical liberal models of rights and citizenship, isolating the individual in their temporal and social context. As a result, learning about residential schools is reduced to learning about specific crimes committed by specific persons against other individuals. Ahistorical liberal juridical discourses risk reducing singular testimonies to a litany of child-centred narratives of undifferentiated victimhood. In a similar vein, it is the image of the rights- and freedom-deprived child that concerns Henderson (2013) as that image is mobilized in a contemporary “culture of redress and reconciliation” (p.63): this figure of the confined, interned or “Carceral” Child “condenses the classical liberal understanding of negative freedom” (2013, p. 70). While politically effective, the figure of the Carceral Child invites a broader public to take up modes of sympathetic identification that recognize only individual, time-specific forms of harm or reparation and occlude collective legacies and implication (2013, pp. 66-9). This decontextualization is exacerbated in political cultures that “[channel] the clarity and certainty of moral outrage produced by the publicization of grief towards privatized forms of political participation such as empathetic spectatorship” (Berlant, 2008 in Henderson & Wakeham, 2013, p. 77). When empathetic identification with an ahistorical figure of human rights is privatized and

sentimentalized, it can work to reinforce the segregation of collective historical memory, fueling denial and dissociation (“I didn’t do it. I wasn’t even born”).

The problem of sentimentality (Bal, 2007, p. 94) lies, then, in the slipperiness of feelings, when representations of suffering stir up “bottomless but directionless emotion” (p.95) and passive, unreflective identification that is highly susceptible to transference and hegemonic *affective economies* as described above. If feeling is ambivalent, volatile and apt to ahistorical, dissociative practices of selective apprehension that commodify, privatize, and compartmentalize the polyvalent transitive force of testimony (Simon, 2003, p. 50), then it is pedagogy’s task to teach an *affective aesthetics*.<sup>6</sup> By this, I refer to Simon’s vision of a pedagogy that offers conditions and prompts to “figurations of sensation-based thought” (Bal, 2007, p.112) by which the face and force of history might be experienced as a rupture that initiates a “continuing affective heritage” and ethical project (Simon, 2011, p.9, 195). In what follows I describe the design of a young adult literature course for preservice teachers that aims to cultivate just such an affective aesthetics as a practice of reflexive, recursive (re)reading.

### Course Context, Curriculum and Pedagogy: Rereading, Relearning, Retelling

The 4-year B.Ed. program within the small liberal arts university in which I teach prepares a predominantly non-Indigenous student body (over 90%), while offering practicum placements in collaboration with Nascapi and Cree communities in northern Quebec (Aitken & McKenzie, 2010; Aitken & Robinson, 2011). Within the program, one mandatory course in social justice education surveys ongoing histories and legacies of colonization including residential schools. In parallel to this, for 10 years I have also taught a course examining the complicities, complexities, and ethical implications of colonization through a reader response-based curriculum of young adult literature. The course curriculum offers students a range of reading frameworks to experiment with complex approaches to reading ‘outside the canon’ of hegemonic normative coming-of-age experiences, life-worlds, communities, worldviews, and identities. While we begin with texts by such authors as Toni Morrison, Marjane Satrapi and Chimamanda Adichie, we spend six weeks (re)reading three main texts: Alexie’s (2007) *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*, a highly autobiographical, ironically observed novel of a ‘rez kid’ disheartened enough by the structural confinement and intergenerational trauma of home life to face the alienation of attending a white high school; *Indian Horse*, Wagamese’s (2012) portrait of a boy’s passage from the bush through residential school sustained by a passion for hockey that can only insulate him from trauma for so long; *We Were Children*, Wolochatiuk’s (2012) documentary dramatizing the testimony of survivors Lyna Hart and Glen Anaquod. We contextualize these texts alongside works by King (2003, 2012), Obomsawim (1993), Milloy (1999), and Kazimi (1997), as well as resources from the Legacy of Hope Foundation. As part of the course, Cree artist, educator, curriculum consultant, and survivor Ena Greyeyes offers a workshop on art and healing.

My pedagogical turn from sociological to aesthetic forms of learning reflects an interest in opening up the ordinary, intimate habits of sense-making and world-making (Berlant, 2011; Stewart, 2007) that students bring from personal, family, and collective histories (Taylor, 2011a, 2011b). Most significantly, I turn to aesthetic texts and literary pedagogy for the capacious methods and vocabulary they offer for the sustained, recursive, reflexive work demanded by testimony’s call not simply to learn, but to witness one’s struggles in learning (Simon, 2003). Educational scholars<sup>7</sup> have long asserted the unique quality of aesthetic texts as imaginative, emotive forms that can “hold” (Winnicott, 1989) and host volatile libidinal

dynamics, that is the difficulty of transference, breakdowns, defences and recuperations (Britzman, 2013; Pitt & Britzman, 2003; Ball, 2007) triggered by the “event of a testament” (Simon, 2003, p. 50). As described by Justice Sinclair, this event infuses testimony with a transitive address and singular, illocutionary affective force that “initiates a gift, an inheritance ... [bringing] the past with it, charging this event with a future, a possibility” (Simon, 2003, p. 50). In his sustained elaboration of a pedagogy of remembrance, Simon located the central challenge as one of directing this movement from affect to thought and judgment that is impulsed by testamentary force, “a movement ... whose precise content can never be specified in advance, nor assumed to be unitary, singular, or shared” (Simon, 2013, p.195). Key to literary pedagogy’s ethics, then, is an understanding of learning as a nonlinear, non-instrumentalizable, volatile libidinal, and aesthetic experience.

At the same time, I am also keenly aware that Indigenous and non-Indigenous students bring radically divergent learning stances, prior knowledge, and responses to curriculum that grapples with ongoing colonization, its legacies, and latencies. While I consider these very different learning processes to be essential to what Simon (2010a) envisions as the larger historical project of revising the terms of belonging and sharing on this land, my past conversations and teaching observation I have undertaken have persuaded me that the learning of non-Indigenous students can be taxing, and even toxic, for Indigenous students expected to tolerate or facilitate this process. Of course, this depends on the histories of relationships, research, and thinking that particular students bring to the group. Pedagogically, this kind of work demands multiple, nested forums of differing privacy to document, observe, share, analyze, learn from, and extend one’s practices of response to testimony in ways that are supported by contextual knowledge, critical reflexivity, and different models of reading.

Such a response-based approach to literature of social difference, disparity, injustice, and its inheritances is deeply fraught with challenges as there is a danger in any curriculum of reading across social difference and disparity that texts will be positioned as transparent objects of knowledge and ‘sounding boards’ for rehearsals of morally sanitized emotions and subjectivities within a program of privileged self-care, edification, and redemption (Bogdan 1992; Palimbo-liu 1995, pp.12-13). Conventional approaches to reader response-based pedagogy raise other challenges as they elicit and reinforce empathetic identification-based reading strategies (Eppert, 2002). Britzman (1998, p.83) warns of the inherent moralism of empathetic identification: as a “projection of the self into the conditions of the other”, empathy positions the reader as “arbitrator and judge of the other’s actions and possibilities”. This course must be situated, then, within an institutional “site of consumption” (Ghosh 2000, p.39) characterized by a multiculturalist appetite for idealized literary subjects of knowledge and empathy that encourages the consolidation of normative sovereign reader formations.

The hegemonic dynamics striating such an institutional site of consumption were vividly illustrated in the 2014 CBC ‘Battle of the Books’, “Canada Reads” (CBC, 2014) as panelists debated whether and how the aesthetic experience of literature might matter in the sense of somehow inspiring social change. Championing the depictive and pedagogical efficacy of their particular novel, panelists in the four-day, nationally televised program sought to enact a practice of public memory using the aesthetic objects of novels to explore various forms of social injustice and breakdown. For the purposes of this article, I will only note that debates tended to compare books in terms of representation and identification for an implicit normalized non-Indigenous Canadian readership. Implicitly prioritizing these criteria of literary merit meant panelists combed through historical details in the novels for

inaccuracies or specificities that, in their eyes, detracted from a book's comprehensive portrayal of and case-making for a particular marginalized population. Books were subjected to this sort of accuracy test despite different panelists' defence of the autonomy of literary imagination. Alternatively, panelists supported the novels with characters they individually found the most 'relatable', referring to stories they believed "all Canadians could see themselves in" or "rally behind" (CBC, 2014).

Concerns about the accuracy and generalizability of depictions of the lived experience and subjectivity of populations presumed to signify systemic discrimination synecdochally (e.g. an intersex character signifying the cause of gender equality) in part reflect the degree to which progressivist movements have shifted within late capitalism from a politics of redistribution to one of recognition (Fraser, 1997) and expression/voice (Bryson & de Castells, 1993; Grossberg, 1996). Nevertheless, the logic mobilized in the debates linking literature's putative power to transform consciousness (and thereby inspire impactful action) to its efficacy in educating readers through either accurate explication or empathetic identification echoes the prevalent reading practices I have observed over a decade of teaching literature beyond the canon.

A multi-year qualitative study of student reading logs (Taylor, 2014) identified two predominant modes of literary reading across social difference: reading 'anthropologically' and reading 'empathetically'. Reflecting a desire to *know* the Other, the first reading strategy tends to reify and consume constructions of absolute difference, to read Alexie and Wagamese' texts as history or documentary all First Nations' lives (what I term 'Reading for Enlightenment'). Animated by a desire to *feel* the Other, the second strategy reads through projective identification with characters based on selective commonalities of experience or identity ('Reading for Empathetic Identification').

Building on Davis' (1996) model of reflexive recaptivation, the course pedagogy works against the grain of these institutional reception practices through structured exercises that explicitly apprentice students in a set of critical and ethical reading practices. Students write their response to course texts first in raw stream of consciousness (Response #1), then reread their initial response (Response #2) through a series of five 'lenses':

1. *Proliferating and diversifying identifications*
2. *Situating ourselves as readers and learning to read our own readings symptomatically*
3. *Reading like a writer, attending to craft, textuality, generic conventions*
4. *Learning to listen, learning to witness*
5. *Reading as a social justice teacher* (for a full description, see Taylor, 2014)

My design of the lenses is informed by Simon's (2003) analysis of the implicit pedagogies underpinning different practices of public remembrance through testamentary storytelling and reading. He argues that such practices tend to be approached with three aims: to understand the past ('How could this happen?'); to preserve memory of that past ('We shall not forget'); and to "instigate contemporary practices of justice, compassion, and tolerance" ('Never again') (2003, p. 43). While the first modality approaches the past as a distant object of knowledge and explication, in the second, the past is a more proximate object of feeling. "[I]nvoking iconic memories that mobilize affective structures of affiliation", this second mode of memorialization invites empathy, identification and a sense of social continuity (Simon, 2003, pp. 46-49).

Simon warns that memorialization can mount a deeply conservative structure of feeling if the ensuing identifications affirm primordial or exclusionary conceptions of community, or if the identificatory orientation remains fixed on a Past that is closed, discrete, or inert. In

asking students to return to their initial response through Lens One to seek surprising, unexpected, or even uncanny connections (“commanded by a persistent sense of belonging to something or someone that is other than the grounds on which one recognizes oneself”, Simon, 2000, p.19), Lens 1 pursues a key course aim of de-segregating memory (Diprose, 2002, pp. 158-159; Donald, 2009). For example, one student returns to his initial reaction to the protagonist Saul’s residential school experiences in *Indian Horse*, “looking for something familiar in the unfamiliar”<sup>8</sup>. Resorting neither to superficial similarities nor abstract universals, the connection he finds deeply estranges his sense of the familiar and the rural, homogeneous farming community “devoid of natives”<sup>9</sup> in which he grew up. He is shocked and repeatedly returns to Wagamese’ (2012, p. 80) observation of residential school life: “We were stock. That’s how we were treated”. The testamentary force of Wagamese’ comparison pierces the boundary separating personal and textual worlds, summoning his lived experience of responsible, caring animal husbandry and recasting it as attestation to the violence of colonization: “So when Saul says he was treated like a farm animal I say no. He was treated worse”<sup>10</sup>.

The course includes other exercises designed to guide students in using Lens 1 to seek connections through shared history and implication. Developed with my co-facilitator Curran Jacobs, “All my Relations” is a graphic organizer that asks students to individually identify the presence of indigenous people in their daily life—in family, ancestors, friendship circles, communities, mixed or segregated neighborhoods, as represented within the social imaginary, media, school curriculum, the discursive and affective landscapes of their inner and social life. They next identify the absences and silences in their lives, and then envision the presences and awareness they hope to foster, as well as the responsibilities and kinship (Heath Justice, 2008) that ensue from different relationships they identify. Another assignment asks students to construct multimodal archives of their personal storied formation (Strong-Wilson, 2008), juxtaposing visual images to interweave stories or novels read/heard in class with “touchstone” (Strong-Wilson, 2008) family and childhood stories (Taylor, 2010). This exercise follows Thomas’ (2005) encouragement to pursue family histories and intergenerational conversations that reconnect youth to longer memories of belonging (Dion, 2008) and relationality as treaty people<sup>11</sup>. Like the student response described in the previous paragraph, this exercise aims to provoke a reimagining of intimate, everyday lived relations in a way that presences human and civic relationships occluded by a colonial national imaginary and social order (Simon, 2010b, p. 55).

The 2<sup>nd</sup> lens asks students to situate their initial responses as symptomatic and performative of the “structures of intelligibility” (Britzman, 1998) and “horizons of expectations” (Jauss, 1982) they bring to the text as particularly positioned and enculturated members of different discourse communities. This implies approaching their initial reactions to the text in RR#1 as threads that one might pull to unravel “one’s own entanglement of history and epistemology” and discern the contours of one’s historical consciousness (Simon, 2005, pp. 96-98). My instructions for and facilitation of discussions of this 2<sup>nd</sup> lens are informed by Simon’s pedagogy of obscene questions and shadow texts (Simon & Armitage, 1995; Simon, 2005, pp. 96-100). This allows for an examination of the discursive, psychically transferenceal, literary generic, and institutional conditions of students’ initial questions and reactions to Indigenous testimonial texts read in class.

Many students return, for example, to their initial responses of shock, disbelief, dis-identification, and moral outrage towards the portrayals of residential school teachers in Wagamese (2012) or Wolochatiuk (2012). I encourage students to use Lens 2 to reread these



responses as symptomatic of their investment in education as an institution. This rereading demands the unsettling contextualization of students' vocational investments within the colonial complicities and continuities of schooling. In this guided rereading, I pursue a central course goal of fostering my students' institutional skepticism and memory as treaty people and members of a deeply implicated, transgenerational community of educators (Derrida, 2001; Pinkerton, 2009). The kind of skeptical institutional memory I'm thinking of aspires to Simon's (2003) third mode of remembrance. He proposes that practices of "transformative recollection" take up the transitive demands of testimonies in ways that unsettle, "rend" or "tear" the apparently discrete, smooth, and teleological relation between past and present but that also crack the present open such that we experience it as vulnerable and exposed in all its "inherent incompleteness" (Simon 2003, p. 49). The way survivor narratives and historical documents (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2005) lay bare the explicit culturally genocidal objectives of IRS policy pierces and unsettles the kinds of colonial optimism<sup>12</sup> underpinning so many students' investment in contemporary educational discourses that are grounded in colonial logics of civilizational progress and racial assimilation as social mobility<sup>13</sup>.

As an exercise in rereading the abject, "pathetic feelings" (Mishra-Tarc, 2011) that tend to condense on the characters of IRS teachers in non-Indigenous students' initial written responses, I ask the class to brainstorm (in nested individual, small group, and class discussions) what makes them proud to be Canadian. Juxtaposing this list with archival television reports celebrating residential schools (CBC, 2012) and a close reading of the Canadian Human Rights Act's section 67<sup>14</sup>, I then ask students to research historic and contemporary examples of injustice that would form the "But..." column of their "Proud to be Canadian" chart. Indigenous students have the choice of a range of alternative exercises with my co-facilitator at their discretion. In the ensuing class discussion, I guide students in a situated, symptomatic rereading of settler colonial pride, betrayal, and shame as these sentiments ripple through their construction of the lengthy, contested list of "But...". My facilitation is informed by Todd (2003) and Mishra-Tarc's (2011) counsel that any reparative pedagogy needs to attend to and hold the affective volatility and transference from students' inner histories of making a meaningful relation to loss (Britzman (1998, 2003, 2013) as this transference is sparked by the affective force of this third, rupturing mode of remembrance<sup>15</sup>.

I encourage students to return to Alexie's novel through Lens 2 in order to contextualize and historicize their initial (dis)identifications with Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters. This rereading shifts our attention from the text to the racial imaginaries we bring as readers, reinforced as these are by the profoundly segregated organization of most non-Indigenous Canadians' daily lives. My aim in this exercise is for all my students to develop understandings of intergenerational trauma in ways that are self-implicating and that preclude individualizing, pathologizing, or spectacularizing the impacts of unhealed trauma and systemic discrimination in the lives of families and communities. Through a guided reading of Sherman Alexie's (1996) poem "Inside Dachau" alongside Canada's selective adoption of the UNGC on Genocide (Younging, 2009), I distinguish insidious from spectacular trauma:

When faced with the evidence of the Holocaust, we are almost always overwhelmed by its naked brutality; the degree of inhumanity expressed through such an undertaking seems incomprehensible. And yet the same undertaking applied to Indigenous peoples – stretched over a century or two, dressed in a rational of progress, economics, and civilization – seems somehow to lose its quality of brutality and becomes not only

comprehensible but defensible ... If real genocide is gruesome in its lack of subtlety, the forced assimilation as a means of cultural annihilation is sly in its generosity – the Indians were treated as children “for their own good”, the King “watchful over their interests and ever compassionate (Neu & Therrian, 2003, p. 25).

Returning to reread the contemporary setting of a rural white high school in Alexie’s novel demands more than the critical reflexivity of Lens 2. As Simon (2005) advises, it’s the call of memories not my own that estrange my current interpretive frames, attachments, and investments in all their inherent insufficiency:

[How am I] touched to respond to the memories of others, not in the sense of some meaningless sentiment, a too easy empathy, or the false nostalgia of a late imperialism, but rather as a means of experiencing certain events as part of ongoing relations of power and privilege, the legacy of which I participate in and I am called to transform? (Simon, 2005, p. 91).

Rereading both novels as a witness (Lens 4) attends explicitly to the demands of transactive memory and the pedagogical impulse of Indigenous storytelling traditions (Archibald, 2008; Corntassel, 2009) introduced by Curran Jacobs and Ena Greyeyes in class. Concretely, this fourth lens is introduced in a writing derby beginning with the prompt:

Take this story. It’s yours. Do with it what you will: tell it to friends; turn it into a television movie; forget it. But don’t say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you would have heard this story. You’ve heard it now. (King, 2003 p.29)

Lens 4 asks students to experiment with practices of listening that rely on a sense of neither identification, nor understanding, nor belonging but rather “of being in relation to” (Simon, 2005, p. 89).

As we prepare to listen to Ena Greyeye’s testimony, I ask that we approach testimony as a “terrible gift” (Simon, 2006) that awakens listeners to relationships in which we’re always already embedded—be it actively or passively, consciously or implicitly—and inaugurates a relation of obligation. Following a discussion of Simon’s (2003) quote, “The gift of testimony is non-reciprocal; that is, the only way to return the gift, to return the receipt of the problem of inheritance initiated by the movement of testament, is to give it to someone else ... speaking specifically of its teaching” (pp. 55-6), I ask students to write four letters. One is addressed to Glen Anaquod, who testifies in the posthumous documentary (Wolociatiuk, 2012); two are delivered to Ena Greyeyes and Curran Jacobs. The fourth letter, a speculative creative writing exercise, is addressed to their future child who returns from school troubled by their Indigenous friend’s anger at the Eurocentric curriculum and the structural violence it elides. The instructions ask students to imagine their future child asking:

Mom/Dad, you remember my friend, JJ?

He got really upset after Canadian History class today. He said it was all bullshit. He said people like us stole this land from his people and now we’re destroying it. He says

our government lied and broke their promises. That even our family's house is on land that was stolen right from the start.

Mum/Dad, what's this got to do with our family? How can I stay friends with JJ?  
(Taylor, 2013).

It is important to my design of this exercise that the child is turning to the parent in a search for truth but also a sincere desire to maintain a friendship and ongoing relationship they value.

## Conclusion

Watchful of the many ways in which our modes of attending continues to be subject to forces of spectacularization (forces from which no solitary act of reading can ever entirely disengage itself), required is a space and a time within which one learns, one teaches how one learns, and one learns again. (Simon, 2003, p. 58)

I was struck by Wab Kinew's challenge to Stephen Lewis' failed empathy-based reading of *The Orenda* that reinforced the programme's liberal hegemonic frame normalizing a non-Indigenous reader as the arbiter of that elusive measure of literary quality, "relatability" (CBC, 2014). In response to Lewis' critique that the 'pornographic' depictions of torture would discourage Canadians' 'rallying' behind the cause of Aboriginal rights, Kinew posited that the novel asks to be read through Indigenous epistemologies: "these people are engaged in a relationship ... [in] a worldview where suffering is key to achieve something meaningful ... [as challenging as this might be for] a cubicle dweller" (CBC, 2014). He argues that selective, politically strategic alliances are inherently assimilationist: "Oh Indigenous people want to protect mother earth? Well I care about the environment, too so that's great!' But all of a sudden when Indigenous people stand for something different ... then all bets are off" (CBC, 2014). In arguing that "[R]econciliation must not be a second chance at assimilation", Kinew takes up the programme's aspiration to public pedagogy by modeling reading practices that might shift the terms on which non-Indigenous Canadians listen to the stories coming forward at this historic juncture (CBC, 2014). In the examples from course activities above, I've briefly sketched some of the layers, twists, and doublings that I discern in such a recursive process of learning, learning to listen, and learning to learn.

For those of us engaged in preparing teachers to honour the TRC's historic call, Simon's pedagogy of public rememory implies a situated practice that not only ruptures deeply invested arcs of being and feeling but also opens a recursive temporality of response in which to experiment with different models of facing and hosting the testamentary force of an/Other's memories in one's intimate and public life (Simon, 2005, p. 91). I'm conscious of the limited and shrinking space within the overcrowded, over-measured and over-determined curriculum of teacher education programs and schools to engage in the kind of sustained, reflexive witnessing practices that might shift the terms of public memory, belonging, and relationality. Despite our keen awareness of the insufficiency of resources at hand to the task, our project of inheritance lies in this interminable answerability.

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<sup>1</sup> I'm reminded of the conception of education he and many at OISE championed in 1995: "'For purposes of the argument here, any set of social practices deploying combinations of images, text, gestures and talk within a framework that facilitates the taking up, exploring and solving of personal and social questions may be understood as a site of learning. Such settings work on and transform subjectivities and abilities through the provision of information, the development of skills, the formation of desires, and the production of different forms of social imagination ... education is political in the sense that it is part of a value-based determination of the field of material, social and symbolic resources that both set limits and enable particular possibilities across a full range of daily activity'" (pp. 109, 113).



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<sup>2</sup> In his 2003 article tracing the implication of Levinas' notions of sensibility for testimonial-based pedagogies of remembrance, Simon (2003) notes that in a unsettling, transformative practice of remembrance "more is at stake than a form of conscientization in which we awaken to that to which we have been blind"; such a practice seeks not to learn and know more but to witness "the experience of my inexperience to hear and learn" (pp. 54-55).

<sup>3</sup> "[W]hat looks like a political structure is fundamentally an affective structure that forms our subjectivity" (Berlant 2008).

<sup>4</sup> I'm indebted to Ena Greyeyes, Laara Fitznor, Cash Ahenakew, Curran Jacobs, Diem LaFortune, and Commissioner Marie Wilson. I hope to honour testimonies witnessed at the TRC national events in Montreal, 2013 and Edmonton, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> As I explore below, my use of covenantal draws from Simon's (2010); see also Celermajor, 2006 and Azoulay, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> I am indebted to my reviewers for suggesting this clarification.

<sup>7</sup> See Britzman, 1998, 2009; Greene, 1995; Grumet, 1991; Pinar, 2004; Simon, 2005; Spivak, 2013; Mishra Tarc, 2011; Sandlos, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Jeffrey (pseudonym), Response Log entry November 19, 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Jeffrey (pseudonym), Response Log entry November 19, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> An analysis of the surprising range of student response falls outside the scope of this article.

<sup>11</sup> Space does not allow for a full description of course pedagogy (curriculum objects, activities) explored in my next publication.

<sup>12</sup> Berlant (2011) urges us as scholars to understand the circulation of particular affects like optimism as a hegemonic structure of feeling that stitches subjects into political structures and institutions like the colonial state.

<sup>13</sup> I elaborate and illustrate this argument in my next publication.

<sup>14</sup> Section 67 of the Canadian Human Rights Act states, "Nothing in this Act affects any provision of the Indian Act or any provision made under or pursuant to that Act" (AANDC, 2008; UBC, 2014).

<sup>15</sup> I examine the full range of student responses to this exercise in my next publication.